

FRENCH REACH NIGER

A CLASH MAY COME WITH BRITISH THERE.

Described by British Officer—Thinks It One of the Most Unwholesome Spots Visited.

Sierra Leone letter: The strained conditions existing at the present time between the British and French governments lead to the expectancy of almost any excuse being selected as a casus belli by France at this time. An opportunity now exists for a repetition of the Fashoda incident owing to the rapidity with which both the French and British are pushing their outposts in that part of the hinterland which forms the basin of the River Niger and which is virtually a part of the Western Sudan.

The recent annexation of Nigeria by the British government has already led to the interchange of several notes on the subject between the foreign offices of the two countries.

By the Anglo-French agreement of 1890 it was agreed that the French sphere of influence should extend from Algiers on the north to a line drawn between Lake Tschad and the town of Say on the Niger. This arrangement was a very indefinite and unsatisfactory one as it does not state whether or not Say is included in the French sphere and it is included in the territory recently annexed by Great Britain. A French expedition has now penetrated as far as the River Niger and while ostensibly surveying with a view to accurate delimitation of the frontier is occupying a situation some distance to the south of the river in the territory recently seized by the British. It is possible that at any moment a clash may occur between the French soldiers engaged in the expeditionary work and a force of the Niger constabulary as feeling runs pretty high just now between the troops of the two countries.

As a matter of fact it would be an excellent piece of revenge to take upon the enterprising Gaul if the British should retire altogether from this region and let France waste a few of her valuable lives on this tropical gehenna. For generations it has been known as the White man's grave and as such has proved simply a burying ground for thousands of young Englishmen. Only the bulldog pertinacity of the race has kept the British flag flying over what is known as the West Coast Settlements. Added to the disadvantages of the climate must be considered the treacherous and despicable character of the natives. These form a valuable auxiliary to the climate, taking care to so regulate matters that there is little chance of an increase of the white population of West Africa.

As very little is known of this part of Africa a brief description of a trip made by me as far as Akoka, including a little experience with a primitive expedition sent to bring an offending tribe to terms, may prove of general interest.

On arriving at Akassa the landing stage of the Niger company, we rested for a few days before pushing on up the river.

We then proceeded up the dirty brown current of the Niger, between low-lying banks covered with swamps and grass and jungle, the paradise of fever, loathsome reptiles and huge crocodiles. The natives who inhabit the Niger Delta we found to belong to the lowest scale of humanity. The only trait they showed in common with civilized beings was the ability to get drunk, which they succeeded in doing easily on a horrible intoxicant made from the fermented juice of the palm.

At Asaba, the seat of the judicial government, the appearance of the country, dotted with palm trees taking the try improved. The land rises there, and the vegetation become more luxuriant, an open country, dotted with palm trees taking the place of jungle swamp. At Idah, further up the river, we came upon a more remarkable and beautiful rock formation, exactly resembling two gates, between which the steamer passes. Beyond this villages began to appear on the banks and the natives seemed to be of a slightly higher grade.

Upon reaching Lokoja we found a remarkably fine town located at the junction of the Niger and Benue. From here the view across to Gando was extremely fine. Gando is the chief trading center and fishing town of the country to the east of two rivers and is situated exactly at the junction. It was said by the natives that a company of French soldiers had passed through

the town shortly before our arrival at Lokoja, but we saw nothing of them. It is possible they may have been hunting and have come further south in pursuit of their game than they intended. The country all around is open brush with rocky hills amid which roan antelope and bush cow abound.

The principal magazine of the Niger company is located at Lokoja. The cartridges shot and shell are stored in a very strong fort, surrounded by a deep ditch and a heavy stone outer wall. Here there are barracks and all conveniences for the housing of a considerable number of troops, while the manufacturing of the company are down on the banks of the river.

The trouble which we were sent to quell had arisen with a tribe down the river located near Asaba and our purpose was to attack their capital, Akoka.

Our force consisted of four officers and 150 men, and two guns, a machine and a seven pounder. Before proceeding across the jungle we called at Onitchi to pick up the principal medical officer of the company.

After collecting the necessary carriers and transport we started at three o'clock in the morning in order to get as far on the road as possible before the intolerable heat of the day commenced. Owing to the pitchy darkness our column became separated in the jungle and the second half of it found itself in an unknown country with the arrival of daybreak. The native guides were not long bringing the two sections together and after camping for breakfast and a brief rest we started off for N'tagi, the nearest friendly town to Akoka.

The march to N'tagi was the worst experience I ever remember. The heat was intense and the mosquitos were a growth which, considered with any known standard, were the worst. Some of them were at least as big as the tropical wasp.

Arriving at N'tagi we were met by a number of friendly disposed natives, who, aware of our purpose, had come out to welcome us. Had it not been for this, notwithstanding our good equipment, disastrous results might have ensued. The knowledge we gained there resulted in a big advantage afterwards.

The natives whom we met conducted us to a series of obstacles which well might puzzle a military expert.

The town of N'tagi is situated upon a hilltop and surrounded by a belt of thick trees. The first line of defense consists of a mud parapet 9 feet high and a deep ditch 12 feet broad. About 50 yards behind is a similar wall and ditch. The space between is honeycombed with pits arranged like five on a dice. These pits are only about three feet apart but they are eight feet deep, funnel shaped and garnished at the bottom with bamboo stakes, so that anyone falling in is practically bound to be impaled. Beyond this was the fact that grass had been allowed to grow over the pits, making them invisible. The difficulty of carrying such a rush can easily be imagined.

Our friends conducted us to a place where we were able to circumlocate this difficulty. They took us round to a narrow causeway which had been formed and a gateway, their crude engineering admitting a gate by throwing a portion of the mud walls into the ditches. In front of the gateway was a very deep pitfall, concealed by running plants cleverly trained about it. We were shown this and thus narrowly avoided a catastrophe. We were received in a friendly manner after we had been escorted to the interior of the town, every consideration being shown us. By arrangement with the chief of the tribe we took with us a force of 170 natives armed with rifles, guns, matchlocks and spears.

We left N'tagi about noon, Akoka being about a mile distant.

Here we got a taste of semi-civilized warfare. Our approach to the town was heralded by a heavy rifle fire from the outer wall of the town, which was constructed upon the same basis as N'tagi. The advance guard under the commandant advanced in skirmishing order and found themselves confronted with a high wall and a ditch. They quickly formed a hole in the wall while the artillery poured a dose of shrapnel into the bush where a number of the foe were ambushed.

The breach having been made in the wall a rush was made by the troops through the outer wall of the compound. But for the rush of one of our friendless to the front our advance column would have gone through pitfalls as fatal as those at N'tagi. The ground, in fact was fairly full of pits, which we were fortunately able to circumvent and the surrender of the town was quickly consummated.

We learned that the rifles had been supplied to Chief Wacona of the Ubi-

qua tribe which owns all the territory in this part of the Niger basin by agents of the French government.

CAPT. A. FORSDYKE BRYCE.

AN UNPAID-FOR DINNER.

House, However, Got Acknowledgment of Excellent Service.

New York Tribune: Dinner was in full swing at the Hotel Normandie, at Broadway and Thirty-eighth street, last evening, when a somewhat poorly clad man verging toward 30 years of age entered the dining room, and, after surveying the apartment for an instant, selected a table near the window and took up a menu card. The waiter whose business it was to serve that particular table eyed him a bit doubtful, but the man's assurance overcame him. Besides, reflected the waiter, he may be an eccentric millionaire. So he deferentially approached the incongruous guest.

"Ah, waiter," said the latter, suavely, running his eye carelessly over the card, "bring me, if you please, a Martini cocktail, composed of Plymouth gin and the other customary ingredients. And then you may bring me some blue points and—ah—some consomme Julien; these heavy soups disturb my delicate digestion."

"Yessir," said the waiter, all his fears dispelled.

"And—ah—while you are about it, you may bring me next," went on the eccentric guest, "a filet mignon larded with mushrooms, and be sure that it is tender—very tender. Some potatoes, French fried, and—ah—celery. That will be all for the present."

The order was filled as given, and when the filet arrived the guest ordered a quart of champagne. A second quart followed the first. Then a 50-cent cigar was demanded. At last the epicure, leaning back in his chair with a sigh of content, beckoned lazily to the attentive waiter and remarked languidly:

"An' now, m'good feller, be s'good 'a' bring me a Queen Anne roof."

"A Queen Anne roof?" ejaculated the waiter, helplessly. "What's that, sir?"

But the happy guest had forgotten all terrestrial things, lost in a sea of contentment and champagne. The waiter ventured to put one hand on his shoulder and repeated:

"What's a Queen Anne roof, sir, if you please?"

"H'm! What?" murmured the epicure, returning reluctantly to his surroundings.

"What's a Queen Anne roof, sir?"

The son of luxury grinned sardonically. "It's on the house," he said.

"It was, too, and so was everything else, amounting to a total of \$9.40. A policeman took the impetuous diner to the West Thirtieth street station, where he said that he had no money, and was James Hardy of No. 223 East Fourteenth street. It was a most excellent dinner, he said. "Upon my word," he added, "I think th' hotel's to be con—con—gratulated."

"Ah, shut up," snarled the sergeant, as they led Hardy to a cell.

Female College Failures.

The English anthropologist, Francis Galton, tells of a conversation which he had lately had with the president of a college for women. Mr. Galton asked this lady about the subsequent career of the girls who graduated from the college. She answered that about one-third of them derived real profit from their education, that another third profited very little by it, while the remaining third were an absolute failure.

"And what becomes of these failures?" asked Mr. Galton.

"Oh, they're the ones who marry."

An Irregular Proceeding.

Washington Star: "We dunno what to do about that man," said Broncho Bob. "I shouldn't be surprised if the boys 'ud run him out o' town."

"What's the trouble?"

"Well, we've kind got a suspicion that he doesn't mind the rules of civilized warfare. He had a quarrel with Three-Finger Sam, who is the quickest shot in Crimson Gulch. But while Sam was gettin' the drop on him this feller hit him over the head with a fence rail."

The American hop fields employ about 240,000 men, women and children as pickers alone, for there are 72,000,000 hop vines to be stripped, and the crop in a good season is worth \$16,000,000.

Prof Ferdinand des Champs, of the Belgian University of Public Instruction, in this country gathering information as to the political usefulness of woman suffrage.



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THINGS had happened in the town of Rossville—dogfights, runaways, Fourth of July, elections and clothesline robberies—but nothing had ever happened to equal the failure of Thomas Mason, doing business for twenty years, owing his New York creditors \$2,000.

His failure was known at 8 o'clock one morning, and by 9 it was generally understood that his wife's extravagance had precipitated the crisis. An hour later everybody could remember just how many new hats, dresses and cloaks she had had during the last year, to say nothing of hosiery, gloves and shoes. At 11 o'clock Mr. Mason hung himself in his woodshed, and at high noon the body was discovered and public gossip had it that the widow would have to take in washing. Had a vote been taken the ballot would have stood: Sorry for her, 000; glad on't, 3,000.

Mrs. Mason had always been high-headed and exclusive, and so her "come down" was exulted over—not for long, however. The funeral had scarcely been held when it became known that the husband had left her \$20,000 life insurance. Public opinion changed at once. She received so many calls of sympathy that the front gate dropped from its hinges, and had any one dared to hint that she was high-headed or extravagant there would have been a row.

After a year of mourning half a dozen different men were ready to give the widow a new name and to handle her cash. She had taken no vow against a second marriage, and she looked more lovable than ever. The list of her admirers included a widower, a bachelor, a divorced lawyer and three young men, and their feet kept her front steps warm. It looked as if she would have to select one of the six to protect her from the other five, but she was in no hurry.

One by one they dropped out until only the lawyer and the bachelor were left. People said it was about an even thing between them, and the lawyer, whose name was Braxton, must have argued the same way. He wouldn't have been a lawyer if he had been satisfied with an even thing.

When two men love the same woman, she is kept plentifully supplied with bouquets, books, music and all else that a lover may send, and never a day passes that at least one does not long to die for her. Neither man can score an advantage, and the case is finally decided on its merits. The bachelor, Mr. Dayton, argued it out that this one would be, but the lawyer didn't. He began to study the widow's character with a view to making a grand coup. She was not ambitious; she was not vain; she couldn't be taken in by flattery; she had just one weak point, as the lawyer lover decided—she was romantic and inclined to hero worship, and he would build up his case on that.

It isn't an easy thing to be a hero to order. When Mr. Braxton had decided to take that line, the trouble was to find an occasion. There were no mad dogs running about the streets of Rossville, no raging conflagrations, nobody tumbling into the river to be pulled out, no anything. He walked around for a week or two looking for a hero opening, but as none came he sat down to do some hard judicial thinking. History does not state whether he got through at midnight or was still working when the sun of next morning shone on his face, but he had got his plan just the same.

That forenoon at 10 o'clock he passed the Mason house on his way to the office. The widow, who was working among her pinks and hollyhocks, gave him cordial salutation. He stopped to assure her of his undying affection and, clutching the fence, cried out in pain

and finally fell to the ground. The widow cried out in alarm, and when men came on the run the stricken lawyer was borne into her house and put to bed.

It was supposed until the doctor came that it was a case of heart trouble, but he found no symptoms. Then the patient feebly explained that it was inflammatory rheumatism and that he had felt it coming on for days. If the doctor had never heard of rheumatism knocking a man down with a crowbar on the street, he wasn't ass enough to say so. The lawyer was able to pay a doctor's bill, and the doctor was there to make one. If there was anything queer and mysterious about the case, he had only to keep quiet and charge it in the bill. Thus the news went forth that Lawyer Braxton had a bad attack of inflammatory rheumatism and that as he couldn't be moved for weeks Mrs. Mason would be his nurse. A few people spoke of the trouble it would give her, but most of them said it was a romantic incident that must lead to a happy marriage.

Inflammatory rheumatism is a bad thing. A doctor should call on a patient once a day at least, and if he calls twice nothing can be said except in his praise. In this case the doctor didn't hesitate to call. He spoke of the danger to the heart, and he changed medicines, gave directions to the widow about diet and selected a male assistant. The lawyer's scheme worked—that is, the widow spoke words of sympathy and hope, smoothed his fevered brow and with her own hands prepared the gruels and drinks. The patient was duly grateful, and he got hold of the soothing hand as often and held on to it as long as he could. Eventually he couldn't go to sleep unless he was holding that dear hand. It was a matter of two weeks before the doctor decided that the hour of peril had passed, and as the patient sat bolstered up in bed he decided that the game was in his hands. All he had to do was to slowly get better and ask the widow to lay her hand in his for life. He took another three days, and then one evening after he had been read to for an hour he lovingly said:

"Viola, I feel that I must speak to you tonight."

"Wasn't the gruel right?" she asked in reply.

"This is not a question of gruel, but of gratitude, affection and love, Viola."

"Please don't get excited."

"I was never more calm."

"But I think you are excited, and you may have a relapse. Here, take my hand, and while you hold it I will tell you something to soothe you and make you go to sleep. Mr. Dayton was here last night."

"He was?" gasped the patient.

"Yes, for two hours when you were asleep. He asked about you and expressed his sympathy."

"But I don't want his sympathy."

"But you must accept it for my sake. I have done my best, haven't I?"

"You are an angel!" he exclaimed as he patted her hand.

"Not quite, I guess, though Mr. Dayton says so too."

"But what business has he got talking such bosh to you?"

"Can you hear some good news and not get excited over it?"

"Try me."

"Sure it won't send the rheumatism to your heart? I don't want you to die, you know. Mr. Dayton is going to ask you to be his best man."

"B-b-best what?" stammered the sick man as his hair began to curl.

"Why, his best man at our wedding. He proposed last night, and I accepted him, and we are to be married in about six weeks."

That night at midnight the rheumatism lawyer a rose and dressed and left the house, and the next day it was said that he had gone to the springs for his ailment.

Our Coal-Producing Lungs.

The volume of carbonic acid exhaled by a healthy person in twenty-four hours is about fifteen thousand cubic inches, containing about six ounces of solid carbon. This is at the rate of 137 avoirdupois per annum; and, taking the population of the world at a thousand millions, this means that the human race breathe out every year sixty-one million tons of solid carbon.

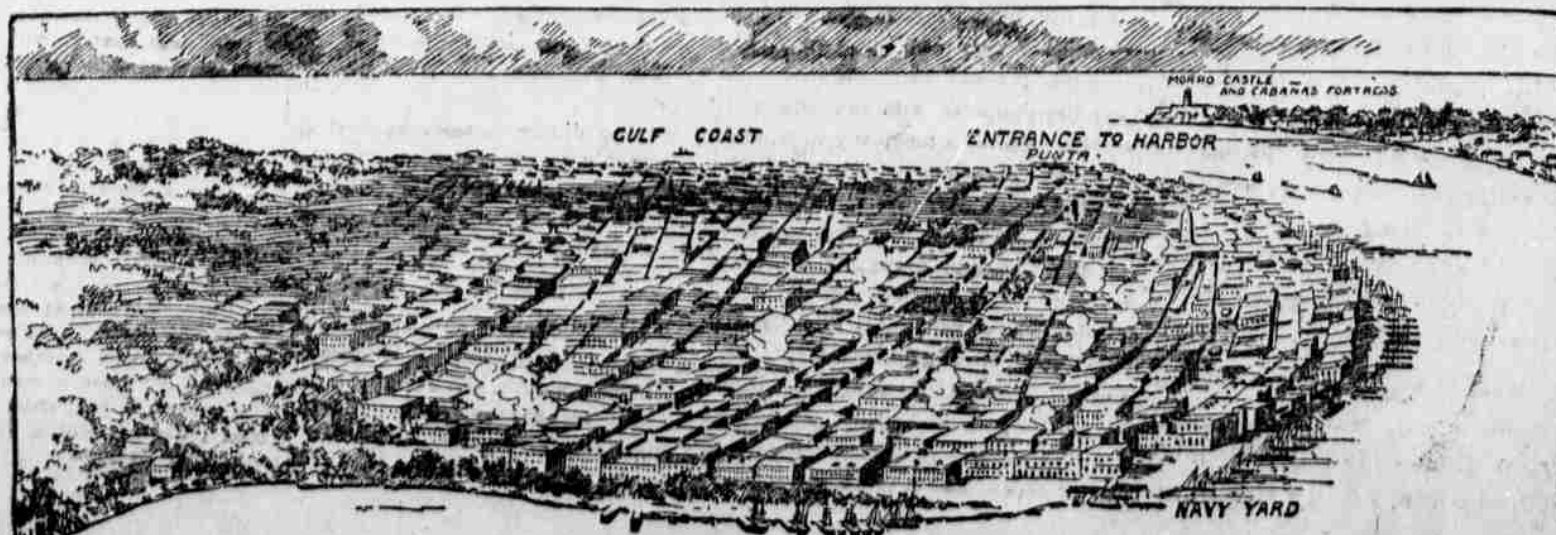
Dr. Jarvis S. Wright, the well-known Brooklyn physician, who died, several days ago, was a descendant of Thomas Wright, who emigrated to this country in 1635. He invented a number of surgical instruments and wrote several valuable works on medical subjects.

In Germany during the last year upward of 75,000,000 picture postal cards were sent through the post. The German government tested it for some ten days in August through all their post-offices, and found that the average was 1,445,000 each day.

The Marquette club, the Union League and the Hamilton and Lincoln clubs of Chicago have joined in inviting President Roosevelt to visit that city on Grant's birthday, April 27 next.

Henry Jackson, whose possessions are valued at \$30,000, is the richest Indian on Klamath reservation. Every fall, for 15 years, he has sent to market \$1,000 to \$7,000 worth of cattle.

THE CITY OF HAVANA TO BE RENOVATED.



The antiquated capital of Cuba is soon to be converted into a modern city with newly paved streets and an up to date system of sewerage. An American has secured the contract, but he has engaged to employ Cuban workmen, and thus relieve the industrial distress that now exists.